STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF MOSES

RICHARD BARTRAM

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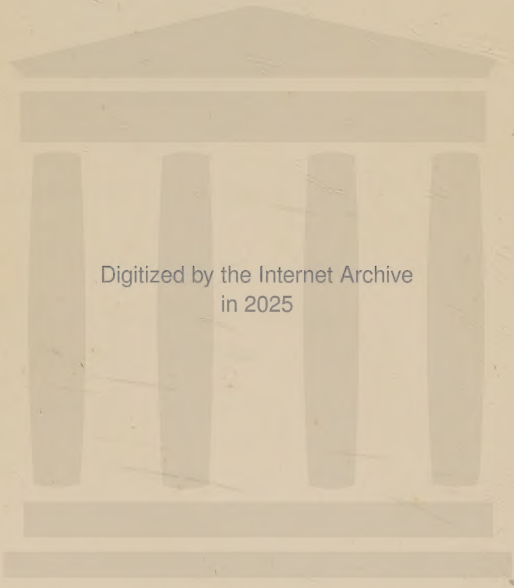

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STORIES

FROM

THE LIFE OF MOSES.

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BY

RICHARD BARTRAM

AUTHOR OF "STORIES FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS"

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PREFACE.

In "Stories from the Book of Genesis," I tried to unfold the moral and spiritual beauties of many of those old-time legends, the historical value of which may, perhaps, be doubted. In this book I have endeavoured to present, for young folk, so much of the life of the great Hebrew leader as will make them understand why it was that his countrymen held him in so much respect and reverence, and why even we, who claim to be followers of one still greater—one, who while belonging to the same race, far transcended all bonds of race and nation, can regard the work that Moses did as part of the great and eternal purposes of God.

I am aware that critics differ largely as to the facts related in the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; but with vexed

questions of criticism I have not attempted to deal, because, important as they may be, I do not think that it is essential we should discuss such questions with our little ones. It is enough, as it seems to me, to give them a rational and reverent interpretation of narratives that, in all probability, have an historical basis, though strangely intermingled with legend. If we can make our little ones understand this ; if, too, we can make them see wherein lies the true greatness of what is narrated, we shall be rendering them a real service. It is in this spirit that I have written this little book.

I am indebted to my friend the Rev. P. H. Wicksteed, M.A., for many valuable suggestions, but for all errors of commission or omission I must be held responsible.

R. B.

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STORIES

FROM THE

LIFE OF MOSES.

THE BIRTH OF MOSES.

If you have read, as probably you have, the Book of Genesis, which you know is the first book in the Bible, you will remember that the last story that is told there, is the story of Joseph. You will recollect that he was sold by his brothers as a slave, that he was taken to Egypt, where, by his prudence, his foresight, and, above all, his honesty and fidelity, he became ruler over the people, and next in rank to Pharaoh the king of Egypt. Then you will remember that there was a great famine in all the land, against which Joseph had provided, so that he was able, not only to give food to the Egyptians, but to sell it to the people of the neighbouring countries; and that it was thus that his brothers and he were again brought together, and that he generously forgave them. The story ends with the coming of Jacob his father, and of all his family into Egypt, and with the death of Joseph.

"Genesis," as you know, means "beginning;" for in it are told the legends of the beginning, or origin of the world, the origin of evil in the world, and the beginning

of the Hebrew nation. The second book in the Bible is called "EXODUS," which means "departure," and in it we read of the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt. There is a good deal else in it to read about, but that is, or certainly was to the Hebrews, one of the most important events recorded in the book, as we shall see further on.

It is said that the number of those who came into Egypt with Jacob was seventy. Not a very large number, you will say, as the beginning of a great nation, but then many great things have sprung from small beginnings. After the death of Joseph, the children of Israel "increased abundantly," so much so, that, as we are told, "the land was full of them." And not only did they increase in numbers, but they became mighty or powerful, and this led the Egyptians to look upon them with suspicion, because they feared they would become strong enough to keep the land for themselves. Several years after Joseph's death there arose a new king over Egypt, who had not known Joseph, and probably was unaware of the great services he had rendered to the people of that country. He saw the Israelites were increasing in number and power, and he bethought him how he could best destroy them. And this is how the story is told in the first chapter of Exodus:—

* And he said unto his people, *Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that when there falleth out any war, they join also*

* Exodus i. 9–14.

unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.

Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour : and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field : all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

From this we see that the very hardships they had to bear made the Israelites more hardy; the rigour with which they were treated did not kill them, it had just the contrary effect to that desired by Pharaoh. Had they lived indolent, lazy lives, they would not have become so strong; hard work, unless it be too hard, rarely kills, it makes us all the better for it every way. But idleness is not good for any of us, neither for our bodies nor our minds.

Finding that, notwithstanding his harsh treatment, the Israelites continued to thrive, and to increase in numbers, Pharaoh determined to try another method. He gave instructions to the nurses to kill all the little baby boys of the Israelites as soon as they were born, but these nurses, it is said, "feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive." As

the nurses refused to do what he wanted, Pharaoh then gave orders to "all his people," that every little Hebrew boy should be drowned.

We now come to the history of Moses, who was, as you will learn, the great leader and lawgiver reverenced by the Jews. It was he who was to lead the people out of their slavery in Egypt. He was one of the little Hebrew children who, if Pharaoh's orders had been carried out, would have been killed. In the story we are now going to read you will see how he was preserved. But first I must tell you that the children, and the grandchildren, and the great-grandchildren of the various sons of Jacob were said to belong to the "house," or the "tribe," of that particular son to whom they were directly related. Thus the children of Judah, and their descendants would be called "of the house of Judah," and so of the children of Benjamin, and the others. One of Jacob's sons was named Levi, and Moses was one of his descendants. The story told about his birth is as follows :—

* There went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman bare a son : and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.

And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein ; and she laid it in the flags by the

* Exodus ii. 1–10.

river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit [know] what would be done to him.

And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, *This is one of the Hebrews' children.*

Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, *Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?*

And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, *Go.* And the maid went and called the child's mother.

And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, *Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.* And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name *Moses:* and she said, *Because I drew him out of the water.*

This is the account told by the Jews of the preservation of their great leader. It is a very natural, and at the same time, a pretty story. The mother, compelled by the cruel Pharaoh to throw her little boy into the water, does her best to save him from drowning, hoping that

God would take pity on him. Pharaoh's daughter sees him, and, with womanly tenderness, takes pity on the little helpless babe crying in its curious cradle, and she determines to adopt him as her own son. You know it was only the Hebrew boys that were to be killed, but as her son he was safe. Although he "became her son" he seems to have known that he was not an Egyptian. And a time came when this knowledge made him deeply sympathize with his brethren in their trouble. The story goes on to say that :—

* It came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens : and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together : and he said to him that did the wrong, *Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?*

And he said, *Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?* And Moses feared, and said, *Surely this thing is known.*

Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses.

* Exodus ii. 11–15.

Moses, you see, was angry at the ill-treatment that one of his brethren, that is one of the Hebrews, was receiving at the hands of the Egyptian; but he was, no doubt, afraid that if it were known that he was really a Hebrew at heart, and felt for his brethren in their trouble, he would not be able to keep the position he then held at Pharaoh's court. Possibly too he felt that the time for him actively to help his brethren had not yet come, and that it would be premature to try and get them to throw off the yoke of slavery. At any rate, angry though he was, he first took care to see if any one was looking, and, thinking there was not, he slew the Egyptian. But somehow the story got to Pharaoh's ears, and he having heard of what Moses had done, no doubt felt that here was a dangerous man to have about his court. Moses might use his influence to induce the Hebrews to rise up against him; he might become their leader, and perhaps would dethrone him. At any rate it was not safe to have him about the court, so Pharaoh sought to slay him. Moses, knowing this, "fled from the face of Pharaoh."

MOSES IN MIDIAN.

WHEN Moses, as we read in the last chapter, was obliged to flee from Egypt, or rather from its king, he wandered a long distance, till at last he came to the land of Midian. This was on the eastern side of that Arabian peninsula running down into the Red Sea, having on one side the Gulf of Suez, and on the other the Gulf of Akaba. If you look at the map, you will see that Moses had thus placed a wide arm of the sea, and a large portion of Arabia, between Pharaoh and himself. Doubtless, if Pharaoh knew where Moses had gone to, he did

not think that it was worth while to trouble himself about him at that distance. In Midian he continued to dwell, and here he found a wife, as will be seen by the following story told about him.

One day he was sitting down by a well, and there came to it the seven daughters of the priest of Midian. The narrative goes on thus—

* They came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, *How is it that ye are come so soon to-day?*

And they said, *An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock.*

And he said unto his daughters, *And where is he? why is it that ye have left the man? call him that he may eat bread.*

And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter, and she bare him a son, and he called his name *Gershom:* for he said, *I have been a stranger in a strange land.*

Here we see that the same tender feeling towards the weak, which had roused him to kill the Egyptian, made

* Exodus ii. 16–22.

him take the part of the daughters of Reuel, when they were roughly jostled from the well by the shepherds. It was a good thing for him that he so acted, for it made him find favour in the eyes of the priest, with whom he continued to dwell. Meanwhile, how fared it with the Hebrews whom he had left in Egypt?

Pharaoh, who was king when Moses lived there, "in process of time" died. But his death made no difference to the Israelites. They had become so useful to the Egyptians, that neither they nor the new king felt disposed to let them go free. We are told—

* The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.

By this I think that the writer of this portion of the Book of Exodus (for there were probably at least two writers), means to tell us that God, who he believed regarded the Israelites as a chosen people, that is a people selected by God for particular favour, although He had allowed the Israelites to suffer in slavery, had not really forgotten them, but the time had not yet come that they should be free. You will remember that in the Book of Genesis we are told of a promise, or covenant, made by God with Abraham, and renewed to

* Exodus ii. 23–25.

Isaac, and to Jacob, to the effect that their children should become a great nation. Whether or not any such promise were made, or whether or not it was made in the way mentioned in the Book of Genesis, there is no doubt that the Jews, in course of time, had come to believe it, and thus it was that some old Jewish writer told the tradition or story, that had been handed down from father to son for many years. The Israelites in slavery must, doubtless, as he supposed, have often thought that God had forgotten this promise: but the Jewish writer of their history, remembering what afterwards happened, would feel that after all God had not forgotten His people; that He "had respect unto them," notwithstanding His seeming indifference.

But a deliverer was to come, and that deliverer was Moses, to whose history we must now return. It is, however, right to warn you that in the story of the life of Moses, as we read it in the Bible, there is much which is called *legendary*, *i.e.*, the stories may, or may not, be true, though no doubt they were believed by the people who told them. How they first arose, or came to be told, we cannot say with certainty. You will remember, too, that when we read in the Bible that God spake this, and God said that, it means that the person to whom He is said to have spoken, thought some thought, which being a good one, he felt sure God must have sent. It is a figurative way of speaking, and does not mean that God actually spoke, as your father or mother speaks to you. In what you are now going to read, I think that what is said to be God speaking, was in fact a mode of depicting the thought of Moses. He had probably heard of the cruel treatment his countrymen continued to receive in Egypt; at any rate he remembered what it was when he was there, and, while he was in Midian,

he must often have thought whether by some means or other, he could not manage to relieve them. It will be better, however, that you should now read the story, and I will explain it further when you have done so.

* Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

And Moses said, *I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.*

And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, *Moses, Moses.* And he said, *Here am I.*

And He said, *Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.* Moreover He said, *I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

* Exodus iii., iv. 1-23.

And the LORD said, *I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters: for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

And Moses said unto God, *Who am I, that should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?*

And He said, *Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.*

And Moses said unto God, *Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say*

unto them, 'The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you,' and they shall say to me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say unto them?

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: And He said, *Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel,* I AM *hath sent me unto you.*

And God said moreover unto Moses, *Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, 'The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.' Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, 'I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt.' And I have said, 'I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.'*

And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us:

and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.'

And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: but every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

And Moses answered and said, *But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, 'The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.'*

And the LORD said unto him, *What is that in thine hand?* And he said, *A rod.*

And He said, *Cast it on the ground.* And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

And the LORD said unto Moses, *Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail.* And he put

forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand : that they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

And the LORD said furthermore unto him, *Put now thine hand into thy bosom.* And he put his hand into his bosom : and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow.

And He said, *Put thine hand into thy bosom again.* And he put his hand into his bosom again ; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.

And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.

And Moses said unto the LORD, *O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.*

And the LORD said unto him, *Who hath*

made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

And he said, *O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.*

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said, *Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.*

And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, *Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive.* And Jethro said to Moses, *Go in peace.*

And the Lord said unto Moses in Midian, *Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.*

And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand. And the LORD said unto Moses, *When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, 'Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.' And I say unto thee, 'Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.'*

I think that what you have just read is, as I said just now, a relation of what the writer of the story imagined passed through the mind of Moses at different times, when he was tending the sheep flock of Jethro in the desert. Acting as a shepherd was a very different thing from what he had been brought up to. He must have often looked back with feelings of regret to the life he led in Egypt; and then he would remember that his brethren were in slavery, and that they were living very hard lives. This would make him sad, and sometimes the thought would come that it would be a grand thing if these Israelites could be freed from their yoke, but then, who was there to do it? They were so ground down by their Egyptian rulers, that they would be afraid to rise against them, even if there were any one willing to lead them. And then who would be likely to lead them? No one that Moses knew of. But unless some one did

put himself forward, what was to become of that promise made by God to Abraham? And had not God "seen the affliction" of His people? Would He not deliver them yet "out of the hand of the Egyptians"? All these thoughts, I say, the writer felt would no doubt pass through the mind of Moses from time to time. Then, too, there would come a thought, a brilliant thought, like a brightly burning light, why should not he, Moses, be that leader? Perhaps, *he* was to be the one meant by God to save his countrymen, to be the means whereby God's promise would be fulfilled. But then again, might he not think this was far too presumptuous for him to attempt, for who was he that he should go to Pharaoh? A shepherd, a fugitive, alone and friendless, how could he hope to "bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt"? Still God was able to give power, and might He not help him in the work? At last, after much doubt and hesitation, he determined to go, but first he asked for leave from Jethro, his father-in-law, who granted it, with his blessing on his enterprise.

Recollect all this happened a very great many years ago. We do not know for certain who it was that wrote all this account, but no doubt it was some Hebrew writer who put down many of the stories that were told about Moses, stories told to show how greatly honoured and favoured he was by God. It is not necessary for us to believe that all happened just as we read in this Book of Exodus. But there can be little doubt, that at some time or other, the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt, and that some great man acted as their leader, and brought them, with God's help, out of their slavery.

MOSES AND PHARAOH.

ABOUT three years before the birth of Moses, his parents had had another son, whom they called Aaron. There is no mention made of him before that which you read in the last chapter, but we learn afterwards that he was three years older than Moses. He too seems to have been obliged to flee from Egypt. At any rate he went into the wilderness to meet Moses, and there Moses told him of all that he was expected to do. Then the two brothers went to Egypt, and "gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel," and these, being assured by both Moses and Aaron, felt that the time of their deliverance was at hand, that God "had looked upon their affliction," and then, we are told, "they bowed their heads and worshipped."

But the difficult part was now to come. They had to persuade Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. And first they tried to induce him to let them worship God in their own fashion: they sought what we now call "religious liberty," that is, the right to worship God as they thought He ought to be worshipped. When men are slaves they cannot worship God as they like, or even say what they think about Him: it was therefore very important that Moses should try first of all to teach these people to worship God, as many of them had forgotten how they might do this. The story as told in the fifth chapter of Exodus runs as follows :—

* And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, *Thus saith the Lord God of*

* Exodus v. 1–9.

Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.'

And Pharaoh said, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.*

And they said, *The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest He fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.*

And the king of Egypt said unto them, *Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens.* And Pharaoh said, *Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.*

And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying, *Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish aught thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words.*

Pharaoh, you see, here treats the demand of Moses and Aaron with contempt. He seems to have thought, that the desire to worship God was a mere pretence for idleness. Instead, therefore, of allowing them to do as Moses and Aaron desired, he ordered still heavier burdens to be imposed upon them. These orders were strictly carried out, and the Israelites were beaten because the tasks set them were not performed, although those tasks were well nigh impossible.

* Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, *Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, 'Make brick': and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people.*

But he said, *Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, 'Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord.' Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.*

And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not minish aught from your bricks of your daily task.

This was not an encouraging beginning for the Israelites. The first attempt made by Moses had ended in their being treated worse than ever, so they complained

* Exodus v. 15–19.

to him and Aaron of their interference. Even Moses was cast down. The story tells us :—

* Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, *Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? for since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.*

Then it goes on to tell how God promised again to deliver the Israelites, and to fulfil the promise He was said to have made to Abraham. All this Moses told the children of Israel, "but they hearkened not to Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." And Moses was again doubtful whether or not he should once more speak to Pharaoh. But again he felt that he must obey what he believed to be the command of God. The writer tells us—

† The LORD said unto Moses, *See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may*

* Exodus v. 22, 23. † Exodus vi. 1–7.

lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they. And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.

It may seem to you unfair that God should determine to harden Pharaoh's heart, if He wished to set the Israelites free. We must not suppose that the writer of this book really meant, that God made Pharaoh do wrong, and then punished him for it. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart—in which expression probably may be included the hearts of the Egyptians—was just like what we see takes place in the world now, when men bring about their own punishment by disobeying the laws of God. If men in power act unjustly, and oppress those who are under them, their hearts become hardened, they grow obstinate in wrongdoing, and, sooner or later, they reap the natural fruits of this, and visible punishment comes upon them. It was so in America when the slave-owners' hearts were hardened, and they refused to let their slaves be free. This led to a sad war, and with the defeat of the slave-owners, the slaves got their liberty. In like manner the heart of Pharaoh and of the Egyptians got hardened; it was the natural consequence of their cruelty to the Israelites; and when I speak of natural consequence, I

mean the result we ought to expect, when the laws of God are either obeyed or disobeyed. Recollect that these laws of God, be they the laws that regulate the motions of the planets, or those by which we "live and move and have our being," or those which teach us how we should act one to another, are all good laws, and it is only when we disobey them wilfully, or take no trouble to understand them, and then disobey them, that we get punished for our disobedience or our folly. In the next chapter we shall see what further steps Moses took to induce Pharaoh to let the Israelites depart.

THE PLAGUES.

YOU must know that among many Eastern nations there is a strong belief in what is called "magic," that is the doing of things in a way which many persons cannot find out. Many things that people used to think could only have been done by magic, we now know were the work of persons cleverer than their fellows, who by their cleverness imposed upon the people. Among savage people it often happens that one man is shrewder and sharper than the rest; and when he, from his knowledge, is able to do something which the others cannot comprehend, he is looked upon as a magician. At the court of Pharaoh there were some of these magicians, and there were traditions, or stories handed down from father to son, how Moses, favoured as he was by God, had been able to beat these magicians in their performances. These traditions were written down in the Book of Exodus, and some of them we will now read. It is not necessary for you to believe that everything really did occur just as it is here stated. Moses was a great man and leader o

men; the Jews, who regarded him with veneration, would naturally give credit to any story that would seem to show that he was especially under the protection of God. There are very few great men about whom some wonderful stories are not told, by those who think that it is in some wonder-working way that greatness is shown. You will, I hope, learn that it was not so much by these things as by other qualities, that Moses showed his greatness.

* And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, *When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, 'Shew a miracle for you,' then thou shalt say unto Aaron, 'Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.'*

And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

And He hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

In this contest you see Aaron came off victorious.

* Exodus vii. 8-13.

Still, neither he nor Moses had yet made Pharaoh feel that it was to his interest to set the Israelites free; a good deal more had to be done to convince him of that.

* And the LORD said unto Moses, *Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go. Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand. And thou shalt say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, 'Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear.'*

Thus saith the Lord, 'In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river.'

And the LORD spake unto Moses, *Say unto Aaron, 'Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become*

* Exodus vii. 14–24.

blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone.'

And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also.

And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river.

This was the first of the plagues which, it is said, were inflicted upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, to induce them to let the Israelites go. Seven days after, Moses was, as the writer tells us, told to go again to Pharaoh, and ask him to let them go, and if he would not, then to threaten him with a plague of frogs, which were to cover

the land. Pharaoh refused, and the frogs came, so many of them, that Pharaoh entreated Moses to get rid of them, and promised, if he did, he would let the Israelites go, and "sacrifice unto the Lord." Moses accordingly prayed the Lord to remove the frogs, but when he had done so, Pharaoh would not perform his promise. It is not necessary to go into the details of all the other plagues, the same things happened each time; the plague came, Pharaoh begged Moses to get rid of it, Moses did so, and then Pharaoh broke his promise. After the plague of frogs, there came the plague of lice, when all the dust of the land became "lice throughout all the land of Egypt": then "there came a grievous swarm of flies into the land of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies." Then there came a murrain upon the cattle of the Egyptians, while those of the Israelites were spared. After this there came a plague of boils and blains upon the Egyptians. Next there was "a very grievous hail, which smote both man and beast, herb and tree of the Egyptians." Then there was a plague of locusts, which "covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened," and these ate "every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees." The next plague was that of "a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days," although the Hebrews had light in their dwellings. After this Pharaoh seemed to have relented, because he told Moses to go and serve the Lord, but they were to leave their flocks and herds behind. But this Moses refused, insisting that they must take all their cattle with them. One more plague there was to come, but this we will reserve to the next chapter.

I think it not improbable that the Egyptians may have

been afflicted with plagues or visitations something like these that you have just read about. Some of them, such as the hail-storm, and the locusts, are not unusual in hot countries. And even now there are persons who think that natural visitations, such as severe storms, earthquakes, and dreadful calamities, are specially sent by God to punish men for wrongdoing, though we have come to learn that these visitations are but the natural results of the laws of God made for our benefit, and that it is our duty to try and find out as much as we can about these laws. But in earlier times men generally believed that it was a sign of some wrong having been done when a man suffered misfortune. If, then, a large number suffered, it was due, they thought, to national wrongdoing.

The Hebrews, no doubt, believed that the escape of their fathers from slavery was owing to the favour of God; and so it was in a sense, though perhaps not quite in the sense that they deemed it. God helps those who help themselves; and those who try to obey His laws, and to do His will, will naturally find themselves favoured above those who are careless and heedless about such matters.

THE PASSOVER.

In the last chapter we read of the way in which the Egyptians are said to have been plagued, because of their king's refusal to set free the Israelites. In nearly every case the result of the plague was to damage or destroy some property belonging to the Egyptians; in no case was human life destroyed. By this time Moses had acquired a very prominent position: we are told that "the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the

people." The several plagues, or visitations, had had the effect of making the Egyptians look more favourably on the Hebrews. Still Pharaoh was obstinate. There was something further wanted to make him relent. That was now to come. What it was we will read from the story as told in the Book of Exodus itself.

* And Moses said, *Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill: and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, 'Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out.'*

And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger.

Then Moses further commanded the people of Israel that every man should take a lamb, which was to be

* Exodus xi. 4-8.

"without blemish, a male of the first year," and this was to be killed in the evening. Its blood was to be sprinkled on the door-posts of the house : its flesh was then to be eaten, "roast with fire, and unleavened bread," and with bitter herbs. They were to eat it with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand. Why they were to do this appears from what Moses told the people the Lord had said to him :—

* For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast ; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment : I am the LORD.

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial ; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations ; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

This feast is sometimes called "the feast of unleavened bread," but it was more frequently known as "keeping the pass-over," because it commemorated the passing-over of the Israelites, in the destruction of the firstborn of the Egyptians.

* Exodus xii. 12–14.

The story goes on to tell us that the people did as they were commanded.

* And it came to pass, that at midnight, the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon ; and all the firstborn of cattle.

And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians ; and there was a great cry in Egypt ; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, *Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel ; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. And also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone ; and bless me also.*

And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste ; for they said, *We be all dead men.*

And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.

And the children of Israel did according to

* Exodus xii. 29–36.

the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.

I have told you, more than once, that it is not necessary that you should believe that everything took place, just as you have read it. I think that there is no doubt that, at some period of their history, the Israelites were in captivity to the Egyptians; that they remained so for a great many years—430 one of the writers of the book of Exodus tells us; that at last there arose a leader who, after long efforts to induce the king to set them free, succeeded in his purpose; that about his efforts, and his success, many legends grew up, of which what you have just read is one. Possibly they may have had to fight for their liberty, for it is in this way that many nations have won their freedom. Our English forefathers had to get freedom by fighting for it, and no doubt when they did, there were some, even little children, who lost their lives, who were very good and innocent. It is very sad that it should have been so, but the blame did not rest so much with those who had to resort to the sword, as with those who, by their cruelty and tyranny, compelled them to do so. But the struggle for freedom has been productive of much lasting good, and so with the Hebrews, the memory of their captivity, and the struggles they had to secure their liberty, helped to make them the great nation they afterwards became.

THE DEPARTURE FROM EGYPT.

IN the last chapter we read that, at last, Pharaoh was prevailed upon to grant freedom to the Israelites. But he felt that it might be dangerous to allow them to remain in his own country, so the freedom was granted on condition of their leaving Egypt. We do not know for certain how many Israelites there were. The writer of the Book of Exodus tells us that there were six hundred thousand men, beside children and others, but that figure was probably only intended to represent, that there were a large number. In reading the Bible, when you come across numbers or figures, it does not do to accept them literally, and in this case it will be quite enough to believe, that there was a large company of Israelites which left Egypt. That is, however, but a small matter: what the writer evidently wished to have clearly understood was, that it was God who helped the Israelites, first, by setting them free, and next, by guiding them in their journey from Egypt. You will see this in the few verses we will now read from the thirteenth chapter:—

* And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that GOD led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for GOD said, *Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.*

* Exodus xiii. 17–22.

But GOD led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.

And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, *God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.*

And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

If you look at the map of Egypt you will see that in order to get into Canaan, or Palestine, the Israelites would, had they taken the nearest or most direct route, have had to pass through a portion of country, which was inhabited by some people, called Philistines. These people were fierce and warlike. The Israelites, on the other hand, were not then prepared for war. Their long slavery had unfitted them for it. Moses, therefore, as a wise leader, thought it prudent to lead his followers by another route which, though longer, was less likely to prove dangerous to them. The writer says "God led the people," and so doubtless He may have done, since wisdom comes from God, and He gave Moses the wisdom to act as he did.

The fear, or whatever motive it was, that induced the Egyptians to let the Israelites go, after a time passed away. Perhaps this very change of route made them think that, after all, they were not very terrible people, and that they had yielded to a rather foolish terror. At any rate we read:—

* It was told the King of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, *Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?*

And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.

And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.

But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.

The Israelites had hardly yet learned to trust in Moses: their long slavery, and the cruel treatment they had re-

* Exodus xiv. 5–9.

ceived, had made them rather cowardly. The story goes on:—

* And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.

And they said unto Moses, *Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?' For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.*

You see they were so terrified at the approach of Pharaoh, and were so craven-hearted, that they preferred slavery and all its ills to death. They had to go through a long period of trial before they learned how priceless a blessing it is to be free. Meanwhile Moses sought to rouse their spirits. He said:—

† *Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye*

* Exodus xiv. 10–12.
† Exodus xiv. 13–14.

shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

Then the Israelites moved on to the Red Sea. We are told,—

* The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night.

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

* Exodus xiv. 19–31.

And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians, through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, *Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.*

And the LORD said unto Moses, *Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.*

And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the

Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.

Whether it all happened just as you have read, or whether it was in some other way, that Moses led the people away from Egypt, and out of the reach of Pharaoh and his army, I cannot say. But whatever way it was, the Israelites now began to find out that this Moses was, after all, a man to be trusted, that to his guidance they might safely commit themselves. He had proved himself a man whom God favoured; he was a real leader. In another chapter we shall see how the old distrust at times came back, and we shall also see, as we go on, that Moses did nothing to deserve such distrust.

WANDERINGS OF THE ISRAELITES.

HAVING thus got his people safely to the other side of the Red Sea, where the Egyptians were not likely to follow him, Moses and the children of Israel, as the story tells us, sang a song of praise and gratitude to the Lord. It is the first account we meet with in the Bible of any such song or hymn, and you may like to read it. This is it :—

* I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously:
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

* Exodus xv. 1–18.

The Lord is my strength and song:
And he is become my salvation:
He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation;
My father's God, and I will exalt him.
The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.
Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea:
His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.
The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.
Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power:
Thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.
And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee.
Thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.
And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together.
The floods stood upright as an heap:
The depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.
The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake;

I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them;

I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them;

They sank as lead in the mighty waters.

Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?

Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.

Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed;

Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

The people shall hear and be afraid;

Sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.

Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed;

The mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them;

All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

Fear and dread shall fall upon them;

By the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone;

Till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.

Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance ;

The place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in.

The Sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established.

The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

You will notice in this song that God, or the Lord, is spoken of as "a man of war;" doubtless the Hebrews looked upon Him at one time very much as the heathen nations looked upon their gods. They thought their enemies must be God's enemies, and that He was well-pleased when they had made a great slaughter of these common foes of God and themselves. As the world grew older, and men began to understand God's ways better—they do not understand them entirely now, but still they have found out many things which once were far from clear—they saw that God was a God of Love. One of the later Jewish writers puts into the mouth of God these words:* "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live;" and another says of Him, that † "He is slow to anger and of great mercy." Still later on, after Jesus had lived, and taught us what he felt about God, one of his disciples wrote these words: ‡ "God is Love," and it

* Ezekiel xxxiii. 11.

† Psalm cxl. 8.

‡ 1 John iv. 8.

is as a Being full of love and tenderness to His children, rather than as a Being who seems to delight in bloodshed and cruelty, that we now worship God. But in the times when the accounts we have of Moses were written, this idea of God did not prevail. The world was younger then than it is now ; and the people were themselves more ignorant. We must not be surprised, therefore, at the views they took, or the ideas they held about God and His ways.

You will remember that I told you in a former chapter, that their long slavery had made the Israelites cowardly, and you have seen how on one or two occasions the first appearance of danger had made them distrust Moses. We cannot be surprised at this. It is one of the sad effects of slavery. It requires time to overcome this sense of fear. Now, the land of Canaan or Palestine was surrounded by a number of fierce and warlike tribes, who, had the Israelites gone direct to it from Egypt, would probably have attacked them, and succeeded either in destroying them, or in making slaves of them again. It would, therefore, have been folly on the part of Moses to have led his people straight to Canaan. He was, however, wise and prudent, and having led them out of slavery, he let them grow accustomed to a life of freedom, before he went to take possession of that land, which, it was believed, God had promised to the children of Israel. For many years the Hebrews are said to have wandered in the wilderness or deserts of Arabia : forty years it is said, though that figure may perhaps only stand for a large number of years. In the Book of Exodus there are many stories of what took place during the first two or three of these forty years, some of which you will read in this and following chapters.

After the destruction of Pharaoh's army we are told

that "Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shan; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water." The narrative then goes on as follows :—

* And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, *What shall we drink?*

And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, *If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee.*

The writer of the narrative was probably aware that in the desert there was a well, the waters of which were naturally bitter, but which bitterness was removed by the infusion of the leaves of a tree, which grew close by. Remembering the life that Moses had led as a shepherd, he would feel no difficulty in attributing to Moses the knowledge of

* Exodus xv. 23–26.

the qualities of this tree, which knowledge he would be able to make useful to himself and the people.

We are next told that the Israelites came to a place called Elim, "where were twelve wells of water, and three-score and ten palm-trees." Here they encamped for a short time, and then "took their journey," unto the wilderness of Sin, lying between Elim and Sinai. This wandering life no doubt brought with it many privations. At any rate we find that:—

* The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: and the children of Israel said unto them, *Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full: for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*

It was just this kind of ingratitude, and this sort of regretfulness for advantages of a certain kind that they had had in Egypt, that showed how deeply the evil of slavery had affected them. And it was this that made Moses feel how utterly unfit they were for at once going to take possession of a land, which it would require great courage to obtain and keep. The writer of this portion of the Book of Exodus tells us that a promise was made to Moses of food, in consequence of which—

† Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of

* Exodus xvi. 2, 3. † Exodus xvi. 6–8.

Israel, *At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord: for that He heareth your murmurings against the Lord; and what are we, that ye murmur against us?*

And Moses said, *This shall be, when the Lord shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not agaiust us, but against the Lord.*

In pursuance of this promise, the writer says:—

* It came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.

And when the children of Israel saw *it*, they said one to another, *It is manna:*† for they wist not what it was.

And Moses said unto them, *This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. This is the*

* Exodus xvi. 13–21.

† Manna means "What is it?"

thing which the Lord hath commanded, 'Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.'

And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

And Moses said, *Let no man leave of it till the morning.*

Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.

This *Manna* is still to be obtained in the deserts of Arabia. It is a kind of reddish syrup; it is eaten like honey with bread by the Arabs to this day. It comes from a shrub growing there, from the branches of which it falls to the ground, and is said to be produced from the puncturing or pricking of the bark of this shrub by little insects that grow there, and cover the branches. The writer probably knew of this sweet sticky stuff, the taste of which "was like wafers made with honey," and that it was good to eat, though by itself it would not have been

sufficient to support life, and brought this curious natural fact into connection with the history of his people by suggesting that the "manna" was first sent by God to feed them in the desert.

It is said that on the sixth day of the week the people gathered twice as much as on the other days, so that the seventh, or sabbath, day might be kept as a day of rest from all toil. The Jews were very strict as to the keeping of the sabbath, and no doubt this is one of the stories that had grown up about the importance of keeping holy one day of the seven. We, too, think it well to have a weekly day of rest; it is good for our bodies, and it is good for our minds and souls, that we should not be always toiling, or thinking of our toil. At the same time we do not think God would be very angry with us if we did not keep it so strictly as the Jews thought it necessary to do.

MOSES—LEADER AND JUDGE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the events I have told you in the last chapter, the Israelites had not yet thoroughly acquired confidence in Moses. We are told in another chapter that during their wanderings, they once came to a place called Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. Then they clamoured to Moses for water, and the story goes on to tell us—

* The people murmured against Moses, and said, *Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?*

* Exodus xvii. 3-7.

And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, *What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.*

And the LORD said unto Moses, *Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shall smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.*

And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, *Is the Lord among us, or not?*

You will bear in mind that in this story, and in many others like it, what is represented as the voice of God, was, as I think, simply the thought in the mind of Moses. Possibly in despair at the almost hopeless task of providing the people with water, he thought that from some of the mountain rocks close by a supply might be obtained. He tried some of these rocks, and found just what was wanted. Recollect he had had an experience of this wild country long before, while the Israelites had been brought up in a very different kind of country.

But it was not only from the dangers of starvation and thirst that he had to protect his people. While they were in Rephidim, some of the people of that country, called Amalekites, attacked the Israelites.

* And Moses said unto Joshua, *Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.*

So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Moses here acts as a military leader. Standing on a hill he was able to direct the movements of the Hebrews. So long as they could see him they felt that he was leading them, and when they could not, they became dispirited. As the battle went on all through the day, Moses became wearied and would have liked to rest, but it would have been a bad thing for the Hebrews had he given way. So his companions stayed by him, and bore him up in order that the people might see him and be

* Exodus xvii. 9-13.

encouraged. It is not necessary for you to believe the story exactly as it is told in the Bible: that is probably one of the old legends told about Moses, having possibly a foundation in truth, pretty much as I have suggested.

You will recollect that when Moses fled from Pharaoh, he went to Midian, and became the servant of Jethro, the priest of that country, whose daughter he married. But when he went back to Egypt in order to release his countrymen, he left his wife and children behind him, with Jethro. He heard of much that had happened to Moses, and when the latter had encamped in the wilderness, Jethro came to him with his wife, *Zipporah*, and his two sons, *Gershom* and *Eliezer*. Moses told his father in law all that had happened to him, and how out of all their troubles "the Lord delivered them." And Jethro rejoiced at all this: he saw the hand of God in it, and he and Moses offered a sacrifice to God. This coming of Jethro was a good thing, as we shall see.

As you may suppose, among so many people as there were with Moses, disputes would sometimes arise, and sometimes one man would do a wrong to another. Then those who disputed, or those who suffered wrong, came to Moses to settle the matter, or as they would say "to judge the people." This was a very difficult and hard task, especially when we remember what other duties he had to perform. One day we are told:—

* Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.

And when Moses' father in law saw all that

* Exodus xviii. 13–26.

he did to the people, he said, *What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?*

And Moses said unto his father in law, *Because the people come unto me to enquire of God: when they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God and his laws.*

And Moses' father in law said unto him, *The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee. Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: and let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall*

bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.

So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said.

And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

Here we see how Moses is said to have begun to be a judge, and a wise ruler. At first he is represented to have himself acted as judge in all matters; but soon the work became too much for him. Jethro saw this, and advised him to employ others in the work, or at any rate such part of it as was of small importance. He was careful, the writer tells us, to choose able, God-fearing, truthful, honest men, and these men helped him in the great work he had to do. We shall read hereafter some of the laws that Moses made to be observed by the people. But up to that time he seems to have kept the laws to himself, and when the people were in a difficulty, to have himself pronounced judgment on the matter. After Jethro had given the very sensible advice you have just read, he left Moses and "went his way into his own land," and this is the last we hear of him.

MOSES A LAWGIVER.

Up to the present time we have seen Moses as a great leader, and as a judge : we have now to see him in the capacity of a law-giver, or maker of laws. Nearly every large nation has, at some period of its history, had some one or more persons, who have either made for it new laws, or have gathered together the existing laws, and made them into one book or code of laws. To the Jews Moses was this giver of laws. Some were of more importance than the others. Some were what we call *moral laws*, that is, they affected the characters of the people who obeyed or disobeyed them ; in the one case men were better, and in the other worse. Some were what we call *social laws*, that is, laws which affected them as members of a nation or society, so that, according as they obeyed or disobeyed them, they were good or bad citizens. Some were what we call *sanitary laws*, that is, laws which affected the health of the people : and some were what we call *laws relating to worship*, and the maintenance of religion.

With respect to some of these, the writers of the Book of Exodus tell us, that they were given to Moses direct by God, and were regarded as of great authority in consequence. You will remember how deeply the Jews of later times trusted in God : they would naturally regard Him with deep reverence, and they would equally believe that all good laws came from Him. It is this belief which probably led to the story told in the Book of Exodus of the way in which certain laws, or, as they are usually called, " The Ten Commandments," were given.

The writer tells us that, in the third month after the Israelites had left Egypt they came to the desert of Sinai, and encamped at the foot of the mountain there. Moses, it is said, went up into the mount, and there God told him that if the Israelites would obey Him then they should be "a peculiar treasure" unto Him above all people, and they should be "an holy nation." Moses repeated this to the people, who promised to do "all that the Lord hath spoken." Moses again went up into the mount, and he was charged to warn the people that on the third day some great event would happen. Then we are told :—

* It came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud ; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God ; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire : and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the

* Exodus xix. 16–20.

top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

Moses was then charged not to let the people come up into the mount; only he and Aaron were to come. So Moses returned to the people, and told them what God had said. And then we read what it was that God said:*—

I.

I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

By this it was intended that the Israelites should worship one God only: they were not to do as the Egyptians had done, or even as the other nations, by whom they were now surrounded, were doing in worshipping many gods.

II.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

In this the Israelites were specially warned against following the practices of the other nations in their ways,

* Exodus xx. 2–17.

or modes of worship. It was most important that the worship should be pure; and not mixed with a number of ceremonies which had, in the case of other nations, led to wicked doings.

III.

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain;* for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

In speaking and thinking of God, they were to be reverent, as was only befitting the great and good Being whom they were to worship. An idle way of talking about Him was, and is, not likely to lead men to reverence and worship Him.

IV.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

The keeping of the sabbath was among the Jews regarded as a very important matter. You will recollect

* This is translated by some, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God upon a lie;" *i.e.*, "Thou shalt not confirm a lie by an appeal to God." But the statement in the text is that usually adopted, and has the meaning given above generally attached to it.

that in the Book of Genesis, in the Story of Creation, it was stated that after God had made everything, He rested from His labours on the seventh day. It is this legend that is referred to here.

V.

Honour thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

This commandment you see refers not so much to man's duty towards God as towards his fellow men. It expressed the duty that men owe to their parents, who by their love for, and tender care of, their children, have earned from them the right to their respect and affection.

VI.

Thou shalt not kill.

This again is a command relating to the mutual duties between man and man ; it shows how sacred a thing is the life that God has given us, to use and not to destroy.

VII.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

That is, that husbands and wives should be true and faithful to each other.

VIII.

Thou shalt not steal.

Another law relating to the duty of man to man. By taking what does not belong to us, we injure the rights of others, and this injury is a wrong done to them.

IX.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

In other words, they were to be truthful in all their dealings.

X.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.

This commandment was aimed at the vice of indulging such a spirit as might lead to wrongdoing. Coveting, or desiring to have what belongs to others, may lead to something worse, such as stealing or killing.

These are the ten great commandments that formed part of the law of Moses. He is said to have made other laws, about which I will tell you in another chapter, but these are always looked upon as the most important, because some, if not all, are regarded as laws that are binding upon us to-day, quite as much as they were in the time of Moses; that is, we feel that they are good laws, and, because they are good, they ought to be obeyed. And it is also because we feel that they are true and good, and have been so for so long a time, that we think that they must be divine or God-given laws. It does not matter whether the way in which they are said to have been given, was really the true way; I do not think that all that is said to have occurred really did occur; but I do think that it is right to worship one God; that He is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth; that it is not good for us to try and make an image of God,

who is greater far than all pictures and images we may draw or make ; and I do think that we ought to be reverent when we speak about God, and not indulge in idle talk about Him. It is right, too, that on one day in seven we should rest from the labour that we are daily engaged in, not because of what is told us in the Book of Genesis or Exodus, but because it is good that we should have the opportunity, at stated times, of thinking about matters which in the worry and toil of life we are apt to forget. We believe that God never rests—Jesus said when reproached for doing good on the Sabbath, "My Father worketh hitherto," that is, continually ; that His care for us is never ending ; but that only ought to make us love to think how we can best serve Him. Then, again, all the other commandments, we believe, are good, because we feel that we should do to others just that which we would have them do to us. And it is thus that we have come to think that these commands are what we ought to obey, even if we do not believe that they were first given as we read in the Book of Exodus.

SOME LAWS OF MOSES.

YOU have read in the previous chapter about the Ten Commandments, or, as they are sometimes called, "The Decalogue." These were the ten principal laws given by Moses to be obeyed by the Israelites. But there were several other laws he is said to have made. These, however, are regarded as less important, and indeed in some cases they had relation only to the peculiar circumstances of the time, and of the people for whom they were made. Some of these laws were very harsh and severe, and death was the punishment awarded for many

offences we have learnt to treat somewhat differently. For instance :—

* He that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.

And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.

And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

† Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

Then, too, some of the laws were a little unreasonable, such as—

‡ If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die : then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten ; but the owner of the ox shall be quit.

It may be very right and proper to kill an ox that is dangerous to human beings, but there seems to be no reason why its flesh should not be eaten. In some of the laws the spirit of revenge seems to us to be encouraged, or, at any rate not strongly enough controlled, as for instance :—

§ Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

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* Exodus xxi. 12, 15–17.
† Exodus xxii. 18.
‡ Exodus xxi. 28.
§ Exodus xxi. 24, 25.

On the other hand, many of the laws were based on a proper sense of justice as between man and man.

* If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution. If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

† Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Here are some more, which are as good and true now as they were then:—

‡ Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:

§ Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

And these seem to be full of a more kindly spirit than some of the others I have quoted:—

¶ If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass

* Exodus xxii. 5, 6. † Exodus xxii. 21. ‡ Exodus xxiii. 2. § Exodus xxiii. 7. ¶ Exodus xxiii. 4, 5.

going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

Then some had to do with the mode in which they cultivated their land, so that it might be made productive.

* And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.

There were also laws relating to worship, and directions as to the way in which a tabernacle or temple, where such worship was to be held, was to be made; also directions as to the setting aside of certain families to be priests, and the way they should be dressed; also as to the sacrifices to be offered, and many other things which it is scarcely necessary that I should describe in full, because they are not very important for you to know.

* Exodus xxiii. 10, 11.

THE GOLDEN CALF.

THERE is a story told in connection with the giving of some of the laws about which we read in the last chapter. Many of these laws were so good, that the people believed that they were given direct by God, and it was supposed that He had told them to Moses on different occasions when he went up into the mountain.

The story you are now going to read represents, that the life they had led in Egypt had had a bad effect on the Hebrews in more ways than one. You will remember that their slavery had made them rather timid and cowardly : they had also learned to join in the worship of idols, and their sojourn in the wilderness had not been long enough for them to learn to trust in God, as Moses did. The writer tells us how, on one occasion, Moses retired to the mountain, and stayed there longer than usual. During this retirement something happened, which showed very clearly, that the people, notwithstanding all that Moses had done for them, at times forgot this, and ceased to trust in him. The writer goes on as follows :—

* And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, *Up, make us gods, which shall go before us ; for as for this Moses, the man that*

* Exodus xxxii. 1–6.

brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

And Aaron said unto them, *Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.*

And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, *These be thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, *To morrow is a feast to the Lord.*

And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

There may have been some excuse for the people. Most of them had been brought up in the midst of a religion, which presented to those who worshipped, some image or symbol which they could see. They had not fully learned to worship God as a great Unseen Spirit, and loving Father, and they were only beginning to see, somewhat dimly, what Moses was trying to teach them. But Aaron knew more than they did: he had been set

apart by Moses as one of God's priests : from him more was to be expected, he was faithless to his duty. He should have told the people how wrong they were, instead of which he did as the multitude wished him. The story proceeds :—

* And the LORD said unto Moses, *Go, get thee down ; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves : they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them : they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, 'These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.'*

And the LORD said unto Moses, *I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people : now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them : and I will make of thee a great nation.*

And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, *Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains,*

* Exodus xxxii. 7–14.

and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

You see the writer here represents God as an angry deity; angry because the people were worshipping a calf, and he further represents Moses as inducing God to change His mind, for fear of what the Egyptians might say. Possibly the writer wished to exalt Moses, and so he made him prevail with God. He seems to have failed to see that any such reason as he there puts into the mouth of Moses, would be an unworthy one for a great and powerful Being like God to be influenced by. God is just and perfect, and it would be neither just nor right to adopt so wrong a motive for mercy.

* And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were

* Exodus xxxii. 15–24.

the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, *There is a noise of war in the camp.*

And he said, *It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.*

And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

And Moses said unto Aaron, *What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?*

And Aaron said, *Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, "Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."*

And I said unto them, "Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off." So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

Aaron's excuse was very paltry. You see he tries to save himself from blame by saying that when he had thrown the gold into the fire the calf came, as it were of itself. No wonder Moses was angry. And now we read of a dreadful punishment which he caused to be inflicted upon the people.

* Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, *Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me.*

And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves unto him. And he said unto them, *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel; 'Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.'*

And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, *Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord;*

* Exodus xxxii. 25–28, 30–35.

peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, *Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin— ; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.*

And the Lord said unto Moses, *Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.*

And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

The writer probably felt that it could only have been by some such strong measure as that which he represents Moses to have taken, that the latter could have hoped to impress upon the people the sense of the wrong they were doing. To us it seems very cruel and very wrong thus to punish men for not worshipping the one true God. We have learned that men cannot be made good or true by harsh means. At the same time we cannot blame Moses very severely for what he is said to have done. The worshipping the golden calf showed that the people had not got rid of their old notions, it showed also a distrust of him, and if he was to remain their leader, and they were to become a great nation, it was essential that his authority should be upheld. You must remember

that at the time which is represented by this story, men had not learned to trust to means, which, in more civilized states, they can safely employ. Even now some men have not learned that lesson; and they still think that wrong-doers must be punished with harshness, so as to deter others from doing the same sort of thing.

Of course much of what you have just read is merely figurative, that is, as I have explained before, it did not occur just as it is stated to have happened, but the conversations between God and Moses were simply thoughts that passed through the mind of the latter. If you will bear this in mind, it will help you to understand much that you have read, which otherwise seems dark and difficult to comprehend.

THE MAKING OF THE TABERNACLE.

In the last chapter we read how, when Moses came down from the mountain, bearing the tables or tablets of the law, when he saw the people worshipping the Golden Calf, he let the tables fall and they broke. We also read how Moses prayed to God to forgive the people, and was willing to be blotted out of all remembrance, so long as they were forgiven. The story is continued a few chapters further on. We read that the Lord told Moses to make two other tables, upon which should be written the words that were on the first tables. This Moses did, and he came down from the Mount with the tables, and "afterwards all the children of Israel came nigh; and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai." What you are now going to read was, in all probability, not written till many years after the previous portion, and, in fact, represents ideas which are of much later date.

Now Moses wished the people to have some place in

which they could meet together to worship God, and he was anxious to see if they were themselves willing to make some sacrifice in the building of it. So he called them together, and told them that they were to make a tabernacle or large tent, something that could be easily moved and carried about with the Israelites in their wanderings in the desert. And he further told them, that whosoever was "of a willing heart," was to bring "an offering unto the Lord," and then "every wise-hearted" among them was to come and make the tabernacle. Then, when he had told them what it was that he wanted, we learn that—

* All the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all His service, and for the holy garments.

And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord.

I need scarcely go through the list of what the men and women brought as their offerings. It is enough to say that "the children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the

* Exodus xxxv. 20–22.

Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses."

Then Moses chose two men, one named Bezaleel, who belonged to the tribe of Judah, and another named Aholiab, of the tribe of Dan, to superintend the work, and teach the people how they were to set about it. These men, we are told, God had "filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work."

* Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded.

And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it; and they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning.

And all the wise men, that wrought all the

* Exodus xxxvi. 1–7.

work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made; and they spake unto Moses, saying, *The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make.*

And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, *Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.* So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

There is one thing that I want to point out to you in this little story. You see that Moses did not *compel* the people to do what was wanted: he wished them to bring "willing" offerings unto the Lord. Had they been forced to do this, they would probably have felt that Moses was as hard a task-master as Pharaoh. So, while he told them God wished the tabernacle to be made, he wisely pointed out that only those "of a willing heart" were to take part. The result was as you have seen, that more than enough was offered by the people. It is said, "God loveth the cheerful giver;" at any rate it was far better that men should build their temples in which to worship God, out of love for Him, than that they should be compelled to do it against their wills. In this little incident we see the wisdom of Moses as a leader of men—he *led* them to do what he might have found great difficulty in making them do.

Another thing, too, I ask you to notice is, that the writer makes a very true remark when he speaks of God

having "put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work," into the men who worked there. We are to apt to think that God does not concern Himself about the work we have to do, I mean the work we do with our hands, or our daily business, or our lessons; and that it is only when we are doing something connected with religion, or churches, or chapels, that He really cares. It is not so indeed. The wisdom and understanding we get to live our daily lives, to earn our living, to be useful as boys and girls, or men and women, come from God, and what He sends us, depend upon it, He cares about and is rejoiced to see well used.

It is hardly necessary that I should tell you of what the tabernacle was made; when you grow older you may, if you like to do so, read all about it in the concluding chapters of the Book of Exodus. There is, however, one legend about the tabernacle, which shows how the Jews thought the Israelites were guided in their wanderings by God. It was, we are told, in the first day of the first month of the second year of their wanderings, that "the tabernacle was reared up," and, "Moses finished the work." Then, it is said :—

* A cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

And when the cloud was taken up from over

* Exodus xl. 34–38.

the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys; but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

So it is that the writer of the later portion of the Book of Exodus closes his narrative of the departure, and early journeyings of the Israelites. The freeing of his countrymen was, he believed, the work of God through Moses; but God it was, and He only, who made it possible for the thing to be done. For the further story of the life of Moses we must go to other books of the Bible.

Before we do this, however, I must just explain to you that in the book next in position to Exodus, that is the Book of Leviticus, we learn some of the laws by which the Jews were governed. They are called the laws of Moses, and possibly some of them were his laws, but the others were prepared many years after his death, and most probably under the influence of the priests, who afterwards exercised great power over the Jews. Many of these laws were made so as to add to the power and wealth of these priests; many of them were very stern; others related to the food the people were to eat, the persons they might marry, the offerings for wrong-doing, the feasts they were to keep, the punishment for sin, and other matters. Some of the laws were very good and useful laws, and others were only useful just for the time and the place at which they were made. Moses is always represented as being very strict about the worship of

God, and very stern in his punishment of those who treated Him irreverently. There is a story told in the twenty-fourth chapter of Leviticus, which illustrates this. There was a man whose father had been an Egyptian, but whose mother was an Israelite. One day this man strove or quarrelled with an Israelite, and while they were doing so he "blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed." Then we are told that "Moses spake to the children of Israel, that they should bring forth him that had cursed, out of the camp, and stone him with stones." And this they did.

MOSES'S TROUBLES.

THE story of Moses is continued in the fourth book of the Bible, called "Numbers." It is so called because it begins with the numbering or enumeration of the people, or "children of Israel." It contains much more than this, and as this numbering is not a matter of much interest, we will pass on to those parts of the book which relate to the doings of Moses. And what we read shows us that he had still much difficulty to contend with, especially in connection with his own people. About some of these stories I will now tell you.

On one occasion we read that the children of Israel murmured because they had no flesh to eat. They had got tired of the manna which, you remember, was nearly the only thing they had for food. They said—

* Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the

* Numbers xi. 4–6.

leeks, and the onions, and the garlick : but now our soul is dried away : there is nothing at all, beside this manna before our eyes.

Then Moses, it is said, cried out to the Lord, and complained that he should be compelled to provide for such people. "I am not able," he said, "to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight ; and let me not see my wretchedness." In order to ease Moses of the burden, which rested sorely upon him, seventy elders were chosen to assist him. The story goes on to say that—

* The Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders : and it came to pass, that when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad : and the spirit rested upon them ; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle : and they prophesied in the camp.

And there ran a young man and told Moses, and said, *Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.* And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant

* Numbers xi. 25–33.

of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, *My lord Moses, forbid them.* And Moses said unto him, *Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!*

And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel. And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: . . . . and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague.

I hope you noticed the noble answer of Moses to Joshua, when he wanted his master to forbid Eldad and Medad prophesying, or proclaiming God's greatness, and goodness. Joshua thought that as they had not gone with Moses to the tabernacle, they were acting wrongly. Moses, on the contrary, showed no signs of envy. That the people should know of God's goodness was far more

important than that he alone should proclaim it; and he welcomed any who would help him, even though he should not have asked them for the help.

On another occasion Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses, saying, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?" Then we are told that Miriam was struck with leprosy—a terrible disease, known in the hot countries of the East—but that at the earnest prayer of Moses she was cured. No punishment seems to have been awarded to Aaron; but why he should have been allowed to go free does not appear.

We now come to an important crisis in the story of the wanderings of the Israelites. You will remember that I told you that when Moses left Egypt he did not at once lead them straight to the land of Canaan. He knew that the Israelites had not been trained to fight with the fierce people who dwelt in Southern Canaan, and that, were they to be attacked by these Philistines, they would probably be conquered, and again become slaves. He was not quite certain, either, about the kind of people who lived in Canaan itself. But the time had now come, as he thought, when he ought to know something of this "promised land." So Moses chose out twelve men, one from each of the tribes, and sent them from the wilderness of Paran, where they were, "to spy out the land." The rest of the story you shall read as it is told in the Bible itself:—

* And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, *Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain:*

* Numbers xiii. 17–33.

and see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents or in strongholds; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.

So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hannath. And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were.

And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence.

And they returned from searching of the land after forty days. And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word

unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land.

And they told him, and said, *We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreorer we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.*

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, *Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.*

But the men that went up with him said, *We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.*

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, *The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.*

There was a large difference you see between Caleb and the other spies. He was bold and adventurous: they were timid. He knew as well as they did that there were great difficulties in the way before they could hope to get to the land flowing with milk and honey, but while they were content to stay where they were, rather than face these difficulties, he was all for going, believing that they were "well able to overcome" them. He had learned what the others had not, that it is only by overcoming the perils that lie in our way, and by manfully meeting them and pushing them aside, that we can hope to attain joy and comfort. We shall see hereafter how he was rewarded for his brave confidence.

* And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, *Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!*

And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

And they said one to another, *Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.*

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces be-

* Numbers xiv. 1–5.

fore all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

This was a sad return for the years of toil and trouble through which Moses had gone, and no wonder that he felt prostrated at the cowardice and selfish ingratitude of the Israelites. The story goes on to say:—

* And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: and they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, *The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.*

If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.

But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

In what follows you must regard much of it as figurative, or as something which describes what might have passed through the mind of Moses. This people, he felt,

* Numbers xiv. 6–10.

were wholly undeserving of his care; would it not, he thought, be better to leave them to themselves, and go to some other nation and try to serve the people there. But then what would the Egyptians say? Would not they speak scornfully of the God whom Moses worshipped? Would not they regard it as a triumph for their gods, that these Israelites were destroyed? At the same time he would think that they had sinned and been rebellious against God, and that He must be entreated to pardon them for their wrong: therefore he prayed to God to forgive them.

* And the Lord said unto Moses, *How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.*

And Moses said unto the LORD, *Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one*

* Numbers xiv. 11–19.

man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, "Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness."

And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, "The Lord is long suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations." Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

I do not think that God talked as he is here represented to have done, or that He was influenced by such reasons as Moses puts before him. You will remember that the writer of this book was writing many years after the events he was recording, and that he was trying to present a vivid picture of the way in which God preserved the Israelites in their wanderings. He was writing about things that had happened so long before, that the exact details were not known to him; and he wrote down some of the traditions or stories that had grown up about these events. If you will bear this in mind it will help you to understand much of what follows.

* And the LORD said, *I have pardoned accord-*

* Numbers xiv. 20–25.

ing to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoke me see it: but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it. To-morrow turn you and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

There is another account which tells us that Joshua, as well as Caleb, was to come into the Promised Land, also the little ones, the children of the men who had murmured. And it is also stated that for forty years was God's promise to be withheld from them.

Then the writer goes on to say that after Moses had told the people what was to happen to them, some of them determined to "go up into the place which the Lord hath promised," notwithstanding that Moses warned them not, and the result was that "the Amalekites came down on them, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah."

There is another story told of the terrible punishment that befel some other men who rebelled against Moses. It is told in the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Num-

bers, and while it is very possible that some such rebellion did take place, and that it was very severely punished, it is not necessary that we should believe that everything occurred just as it is here told. It is an old legend told by some Jewish writer, probably some priest, who told it as he had heard it.

* Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: and they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, *Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?*

And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face: and he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, *Even to-morrow the Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him. even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all*

* Numbers xvi. 1–35.

his company; and put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord to-morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.

And Moses said unto Korah, *Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?*

And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, *We will not come up: is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.*

And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD, *Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.*

And Moses said unto Korah, *Be thou and all thy company before the Lord, thou and they, and Aaron to-morrow: and take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the Lord every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each of you his censer.*

And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron. And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation.

And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, *Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.*

And they fell upon their faces, and said, *O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation.*

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, *Speak unto the congregation, saying, "Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."*

And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. And he spake unto the congregation, saying, *Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of their's, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.*

So they got up from the tabernacle of Korah Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.

And Moses said, *Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.*

And it came to pass as he had made an end

of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, *Lest the earth swallow us up also.* And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

This is a terrible story of vengeance. The writer no doubt believed, and wished others to believe, that it was by such acts as these God showed his favour to Moses. I think that he was mistaken, and that he was picturing God as a very cruel vengeful being. We have come to think of God very differently, and cannot believe that all happened as it is here represented. Nor can we think that even if the work of destruction was that of Moses, that he acted as a great and noble leader should have acted. It might be necessary in order to put down rebellion to kill the leaders, but it could not be right that there should be a general slaughter of all who had joined in the rising. We cannot be surprised to read further, that "on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron."

FURTHER WANDERINGS.

After a time the Israelites came to the desert of Zin, which was further to the north of that part of the Arabian peninsula in which they had been wandering. And at Kadesh, which was in this desert, Miriam died and was buried. It was while the Israelites were here, that an event is said to have happened, which was the reason why Moses did not himself lead the people into Canaan. The writer tells us that at this Kadesh there was a scarcity of water, at which the people complained bitterly. Then we are told that the Lord appeared to Moses, and told him to call the people together, and he and Aaron were to speak "unto the rock before their eyes," and then it should bring forth water out of the rock. You will observe here that Moses was told simply to *speak* to the rock. Moses and Aaron, it is said, gathered the people together before the rock, and the former having said to them, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" smote it twice, and "water came out abundantly." You will observe that Moses *did not speak* to the rock, but that he smote it. He did not do as he had been commanded, and as this seemed to imply that he did not believe God, or, at any rate, as it seemed that he did it by himself alone, he was to be punished by not being allowed to bring the Hebrews into the land which God had given them.

While they were at Kadesh, Moses sent messengers to the King of Edom, which, if you look at the map, you will see is a country close by, asking him for leave for

the Israelites, to pass through his country, promising not to pass through the fields or through the vineyards, but to pass along "the king's highway." The Edomites, however, refused this permission, so the children of Israel turned south again till they came to Mount Hor, which was still on the borders of Edom. Here Aaron who, like Moses, was not permitted to enter the Promised Land, died, and the Israelites mourned for him thirty days. While they were here, too, they were attacked at a place afterwards called Hormah, by some Canaanites, but they succeeded in completely defeating them. As they were not able to pass through Edom, they determined "to compass the land of Edom," that is to go round it. This was a troublesome and discouraging task, and we are told the people murmured at having to do this. There is a story told in connection with this, which is as follows :—

* And the people spake against God, and against Moses, *Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.* And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, *We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us.* And Moses prayed for the people.

* Numbers xxi. 5–9.

And the Lord said unto Moses, *Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.*

And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived.

It is not necessary to try and find an explanation of all the stories that are told in the Old Testament. The story, just told, is probably nothing more than a mode of explaining, how an idolatrous practice, which grew up among the Hebrews, had come to be connected with the name of Moses. In another book (*) we read that Hezekiah, one of the Kings of Judah, desiring to reform much that he thought to be wrong, "brake the images and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it." That Moses could have sanctioned idolatry the Jewish writer would not believe, as we can readily understand.

The Israelites wandered on now northwards till they came to the country of the Amorites. Moses sent to their King Sihon a message similar to that he had sent the Edomite king, and Sihon also would not let the Israelites pass through his land. Not only did he thus refuse permission, but he came with his people and attacked the Israelites. They, however, were victorious, killed Sihon, and took possession of the land of the Amorites. This success encouraged them greatly, and

* 2 Kings, c. 18 v. 4.

when, shortly after, Og the king of Bashan, went out against them at a place called Edrei, another battle was fought, resulting in victory for the Hebrews, who "smote him [Og], and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive : and they possessed his land." Of this Og, we are told in another part of the Bible, that he was of great size, and one of the last of the giants ; so large was he, that his bedstead was nine cubits, or about fifteen feet long, and four cubits, or seven feet wide.

There is not much more told us about Moses in the Book of Numbers, that I think you will care to hear, except that his successor as leader of the Israelites was appointed, that successor being Joshua, one of those men who had been sent to spy out the land of Canaan, and who had spoken up bravely when the other spies had let their fears get mastery over them. What little there remains to tell of the story of the life of Moses, we get from another book ; about which I will speak to you in another chapter.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

THE final scenes in the life of Moses we read about in the Book of Deuteronomy, which is the fifth book of the Pentateuch. The word Deuteronomy means "the second law," and the reason why the book is so called is, because in it is found another statement to some extent, of the law which is said to have been given by Moses in the Book of Exodus. It was probably written by some other person than the writer of the book from which we have learned so much about Moses. We do not know who it was that wrote either of them, but many learned men have come to think that the two books, although they are

sometimes said to have been written by Moses himself, were not written till long after his death, and by different persons.

In the Book of Deuteronomy we again read about the Ten Commandments, and many other of the laws said to have been given by Moses. Indeed, more is told us about these laws than there is about the history of the Israelites, as to which the writers of the Book of Exodus tell us so much. We read, however, that :—

* Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, *Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.*

Then there is in this book a song said to have been sung by Moses, which is too long to be set out here, but which you can some day read in the 32nd chapter, some of which is very beautiful, as when he speaks of God as "a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He," and as when a little later on he says, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

You remember why it was that in the Book of Exodus we were told that Moses should not go into the Promised Land. The writer of the Book of Deuteronomy tells

* Deuteronomy xxxi. 7, 8.

us that God informed Moses that he should see the land before he died, and in the last chapter gives us an account of the death of Moses. This chapter you shall read for yourselves in full :—

* And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphthali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar.

And the LORD said unto him, *This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.*

So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

* Deuteronomy xxxiv.

And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.

Thus ends the story of the Life of Moses, as it is told us by some unknown writers, who wrote it many years ago. And as I read that story, I cannot help thinking, and I hope you too think that, mixed up though it be with legend and fancy, Moses was a great man. He rescued his fellow countrymen from slavery; he taught them to give up the worship they had learned in Egypt, and to worship, love, and trust the one true God; he bore with them when they at times showed their distrust of him; he tried to make good and useful laws for their guidance; he led them through many dangers and difficulties, and trained them to be a brave and valiant nation, able to conquer the fierce tribes that would have destroyed

them. No wonder the Jews reverenced him as their great law-giver and master. And if, at times, it seems to us he was fierce and even cruel, we must remember that the times in which he lived were not like those in which we live, and that many things that we now have come to regard as wrong and cruel, were then looked upon as right, and brave, and noble. He is said to have done many wonderful things or miracles, but it seems to me, that one of the most wonderful things that he did, was to change a people, worn out and weakened by slavery, into a great and mighty nation, and to restore or establish the worship of God among men who had been brought up among a nation of idolators. And it was because he had himself learned to trust in God, and to see that it is only those nations who themselves trust in God, and in righteousness, that can hope to be great and noble. You, too, I hope, have learned this lesson from what I have told you about the Life of Moses; if you have, you will have learned something that may prove of value to you all your life. As you grow older you will, I trust, read the history of other nations besides that of the Jews, and I think you will learn, as others have learned before you, that in proportion as those nations have come to abhor evil, to do good, and to love God who is all good, they have been great and powerful.

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